



TEXAS CENTER
FOR THE JUDICIARY

2018 Child Welfare Judicial Conference

Cultural Competency

Hon. Carlos Villalon, Jr., Child Protection Court – Rio Grande Valley West

Hon. Aurora Martinez-Jones – Travis County Civil District Courts

November 12, 2018

The Rio Grande Valley



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Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley West

Serving Hidalgo and Starr Counties



What is a Model Court?



Characteristics of a Model Court

- Seek to implement the principles and recommendations set forth in the *Guidelines* and work toward improved practice and outcomes.
- Model Courts repeat the planning and technical assistance process as court improvement goals are attained.
- Model Courts are expected to be “laboratories for change”; meaning they participate in an ongoing critical assessment of their performance and share their results with other sites in order to inform and sustain a larger system improvement effort.



Hidalgo County Demographics

Population estimates, July 1, 2016	849,843
Hispanic or Latino, percent, July 1, 2015,	91%
Foreign born persons	28%
Language other than English spoken at home,	85%
Per capita income in past 12 months	\$ 14,689.00
Persons in poverty	31%



Starr County Demographics

Population estimates, July 1, 2016	64,122
Hispanic or Latino	96%
Foreign born persons	33%
Language other than English spoken at home	96%
Per capita income in past 12 months	\$ 12,483.00
Persons in poverty	31%



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Global Issues in Child Welfare

- Poverty
- Mental Health
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Abuse
- Lack of Education
- Housing
- Nutrition



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Child Welfare in the RGV

- Extreme Poverty
- Large Sibling Groups
- Proximity to the Mexican Border
- Large Number of Undocumented Family Members
- 60 Mile Border Patrol Checkpoint
- Lack of Resources
- No Access to Resources Outside of the Valley

Challenges in the RGV



Challenges in the RGV



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Why Cultural Competency Matters: A Travis County Perspective

Aurora Martinez Jones

Associate Judge

November 12, 2018

We Make Headlines

Austin American-Statesman

Sunday, October 21, 2018

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CPS more likely to remove black kids

Disparities in Travis County the highest among state's 7 largest counties

By Julie Chang
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African-American children in Travis County were nearly eight times more likely to be removed from a home by Child Protective Services than white children during the year ending Aug. 31, according to new state data.

Black children in Travis County also were 4.6 times more likely to be reported to

CPS as victims of possible abuse and neglect than their white peers and 5.1 times more likely to be investigated by CPS. The disparities in Travis County are the highest among the state's seven largest counties, a recent report by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services found.

Statewide, African-American children were twice as likely to be removed by CPS than white children in fiscal 2018.

The child welfare agency provided little context in its report, quietly released last

month, about why the disparities exist.

Financial pressure in part caused by the rising cost of living, limited community resources such as affordable housing, and institutional racism drive the differences in Travis County, which have widened over the last decade, according to child welfare advocates. Advocates fear that the disparities will worsen with the loss of the state's Office of Minority Health Statistics and Engagement, which had shared data with the child welfare agency but was shuttered Sept. 1 after the

Republican-led Legislature cut funding.

Travis County court officials have started meeting with officials from the Austin school district and Dell Children's Medical Center — two institutions from which many CPS reports originate — to analyze data that might explain why African-American children and Hispanic children are being reported to CPS at higher rates than white children.

In 2018, Latino children in Travis County were three times more likely to be removed by CPS than white

children, while Latino children on average across the state were less likely to be removed than their white peers.

"I was really appalled when I saw (the data)," said Aurora Martinez Jones, an associate Travis County district judge who oversees child welfare cases. "Ultimately, racism still exists, and it's alive and well in Austin. We like to look at ourselves as a very liberal and progressive community, and we can be in a lot of respects, but ... people still

See CPS, A14

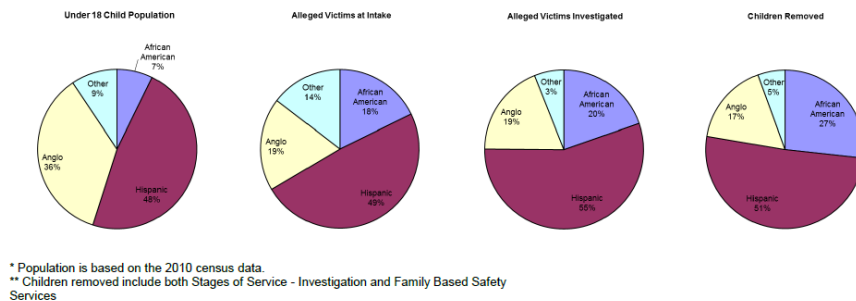


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Data: Highlighting the Problem

Rider 14 - Minority Child Removals Report for FY2018 - Current Ethnicity
Travis County - Region 07 - County Number 227

Category	Total	African American	Hispanic	Anglo	Other
Population*	297,900	21,696	141,960	106,232	28,012
Children Reported as Alleged Victims at Intake	19,573	3,485	9,531	3,697	2,860
Alleged Victims Investigated	9,427	1,856	5,226	1,776	569
Children Removed**	752	201	383	126	42



Assessing the System

In early 2014, the Travis County Disproportionality Committee began developing the **Travis County Model Court Services Survey** with a goal to gather feedback regarding services that have been court ordered for parents involved in child welfare cases

The survey:

- Targeted families of color
- Targeted Spanish speaking families; and
- Intended to measure the respondents' perceptions of how effective they thought reunification/preservation services were for their respective family.

During the summer of 2015, the survey was distributed to child welfare professionals including Child Protective Services (CPS) staff and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) staff, attorneys and judges.

Survey Results

Trend #1: There is not a consistent level of overall confidence among professionals in the quality of available, existing court-ordered services.

Trend #2: Professionals surveyed indicated that they believe the Travis County community does not have enough service providers who can effectively communicate with parents in their native language (i.e. Spanish) and, additionally, more support is needed in overcoming structural barriers to service completion.

Trend #3: A narrow majority of professionals surveyed indicated that they believe services offered in the native language of parents are effective.



Being Trauma Informed Helps

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) describes the Six Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach:

1. Safety – ensure the physical and emotional safety of clients and staff
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency – provide clear information about what the client may expect in the program, ensure consistency in practice and maintain boundaries
3. Peer Support – provide peer support from persons with lived experiences of trauma to establish safety and hope and build trust
4. Collaboration and Mutuality – maximize collaboration and the sharing of power with consumers to level the differences between staff and clients
5. Empowerment, Voice and Control – empower clients and staff to have a voice, share in decision making and goal setting to cultivate self-advocacy
6. Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues – move past cultural stereotypes and biases, offer gender- and culturally-responsive services and recognize and address historical trauma



Community Change is Inevitable & Necessary

Disproportionality in Child Welfare Convening: May 29, 2018

Community Participants

Casey Family Programs	◆	Mission Capital
Lonestar Psychological Services	◆	St. David's Foundation
Austin ISD	◆	Austin Against Institution Racism
Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court	◆	Charlotte Caples Consulting
CASA of Travis County	◆	Office of Mayor Steve Adler
Travis County HHS Office of Children Services	◆	City of Austin Office of Social Health
Investigation Regional Director for CPS	◆	
Disproportionality Manager for CPS (Statewide)	◆	
Dell Children's Trauma and Injury Research Center		
Office of Minority Health Statistics and Engagement		
Foster Community with the Travis County Collaborative for Children		



Next Convening: 2019



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